

BLOOMINGTON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Minutes of December 14, 2020 Meeting

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission met on Monday, December 14, 2020, beginning at 5:35 p.m., via Zoom. Present for this meeting were commissioners Ryne Shadday, Byron Bangert, Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, Latosha Williams and Valeri Haughton-Motley. Commissioners Pam Jackson and Jacob Simpson were absent without notice. A quorum was present. Also present were Nicole DeCriscio Bowe, BHRC legal assistant, Vauhxx Booker and Barbara E. McKinney, BHRC director/attorney.

Call to order: Chair Shadday called the meeting to order and called the roll at 5:35 p.m.

Approval of minutes of October 26, 2020 BHRC meeting: The BHRC approved the October 26, 2020 minutes by consensus. The November meeting was cancelled.

New business

2021 Goals and objectives: Shadday said he wanted to table a full discussion of this until the January meeting to give commissioners time to think about the topic. He said the goals he would want the BHRC to consider include making the BHRC as visible and accessible as possible and making sure the homeless population is protected.

Bangert said he would urge the BHRC to continue to work with the MCHRC in the future.

Williams said she would urge the BHRC to work on heightening its visibility through Facebook, its website and newsletter, to create a proactive campaign to increase awareness of the BHRC and to provide programmatic learning opportunities beyond what the BHRC is doing now. She said she liked the three goals Bangert mentioned at her first meeting, adjudicating cases, providing education and advocating for changes.

Shadday said that his homeless goal dovetailed with a proposal that Booker wanted the BHRC to consider and introduced Booker.

Booker said that his draft proposal was an unhoused bill of rights. He went over the eight specific protections that are listed in the draft. He borrowed his proposal from Indianapolis, Illinois and Rhode Island. He said he would be trying to get a city council member to sponsor this and asked the commissioners to consider endorsing it, either as a group or individually.

Williams said some of the draft seems to overlap with the human rights ordinance. She suggested adding a recommendation that the City create a

commission on the homeless population. She said the City has made progress with Stride and other programs.

Calloway-Thomas asked about the right to use public spaces. Booker talked about public spaces such as the courthouse being locked up during the shutdown, taking away public restrooms homeless people use.

Calloway-Thomas asked if Booker could provide a history of what the City has done to address these issues. Booker said the City has done good things, such as help with Friend's Place, and some less good things. He said the City never responded to requests that public facilities be opened up. He called the signs downtown urging people not to give money to panhandlers "derogatory." He said that being homeless is being criminalized. He said that just as everyone at the meeting could have an alcoholic drink and go home, homeless people should be able to have a drink and go to their shelter.

Calloway-Thomas asked how many homeless people are in Bloomington; Booker said the last count was 365, but the count is always an undercount. She asked why the City has not been able to solve the problem; Booker said if anyone can, it should be the City.

Bangert agreed that the proposal in some ways overlapped with the human rights ordinance. He said that the BHRC enforced nondiscrimination in housing, but that's not the same as saying everyone has a human right to housing. He agreed that the BHRC should be an advocate for homeless people, but didn't think there was a legal basis under the ordinance to declare that housing is a human right.

Booker said he had urged the county to pass a resolution or ordinance that housing was a human right, but it has not done so yet.

Haughton-Motley said she needed more time to review the proposal. Calloway-Thomas agreed. Proposal tabled by consensus.

King donation: McKinney said that the King Commission was again asking the BHRC to help fund its annual King Day event. Dr. Khalid el-Hakim will be presenting a virtual keynote address on January 18, 2021. Calloway-Thomas moved that the BHRC donate \$200. Haughton-Motley seconded. Shadday called the roll. Passed unanimously.

MC HRC agreement: After discussion, Bangert moved that the BHRC enter into an agreement with the Monroe County HRC to collaborate efforts regarding community outreach, education, advocacy and promotion of human rights Laws and issues. Calloway-Thomas seconded. Shadday called the roll. Passed unanimously.

Unfinished business

Facebook live discussion: The commission agreed to table this until all of the commissioners were present.

Appointment to Commission on the Status of Black Males: The commission asked McKinney to invite the two applicants to the January BHRC meeting. McKinney said she and DeCriscio-Bowe would also promote the vacancies in the January newsletter and on Facebook.

Assignment of new cases: No new cases to assign.

Other business: Williams suggested one of the goals for 2021 could be to discuss whether the meeting format works for everyone. She said sometimes the commissioners discussed issues at length and sometimes were more concise and rushed. She suggested developing collegial resources to make the best use of the time available for the meeting. Calloway-Thomas and Haughton-Motley said they were not clear what Williams was proposing. Williams said it would be helpful to know how long discussions should be. Calloway-Thomas said her rule was to determine if she had sufficient information to make an informed decision. McKinney said the commissioners had traditionally tried to keep the meetings to an hour, but that was not a rule.

Public input: No public input.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara E. McKinney, BHRC director/attorney